

ST. GERMANS
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S
ANNUAL REPORT.

1911.

R. THORNTON MEADOWS, M.B., C.M., M.D., D.P.H.,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

SALTASH :
DINGLE & Co., PRINTERS, FORE STREET.
1912.

To the Chairman and Members
OF THE
Rural District Council of St. Germans.

ALLOW me to lay before you my Annual Report for the year 1911, this being my seventh report. This report has been delayed as I have been trying to get further particulars regarding our population. These I shall get from the Registrar General at some future time, but I will not delay longer with my report, but explain the points in doubt as I go on.

As you may know, this report as regards statistics is founded on definite populations, the result of the Census, and therefore the rates cannot be compared with those of last year and the previous years, as these last were based on quite fallacious bases, though unavoidable.

Between the Census years of 1890 and 1901 we had a gradually increasing population, so that in 1901 the Census returns made our population 14,386. That, with the annual yearly increase as between 1891 and 1901, gave an estimated population of 15,034 in 1911, while as a matter of fact the population is 12,274, a difference of 2,760.

The comparisons of the last two Census returns are as under.—

	1901	1911	
St. Germans	2606	2566	decrease 40
South Registration	7209	4778	decrease 2431
North Registration	4571	4930	increase 359
Whole District	14386	12274	decrease 2112

From the above figures it will be noted that St. Germans District has decreased by 40. This we are not surprised at, as there has been very little building there and the tendency is for young men and women to gravitate to the towns.

The North District, we know, has increased on account of the building, chiefly in St. Stephens Parish, and so the 359 increase is quite expected.

It is in the South Registration District that the surprise awaits us,—a decrease of 2431, just one-third of the population gone as regards the civil population. This should be apparent and houses wholesale should be standing empty, but this is not so. I am driven to the conclusion that there is one factor or perhaps two responsible for these figures. Firstly, the Gunnery Training Establishment, H.M.S. "Cambridge," has gone, and maybe her compliment went to swell our numbers. Secondly, what troops were stationed in the forts, and were they included in our population? These are the points on which I am relying on the Registrar General's department to clear up.

This year the necessary forms of statistics are altered, and for our purposes we are no longer divided into three districts, so I will deal with St. Germans Rural District as a whole only.

BIRTH RATE.

Steadily year by year decreasing. This year there were 229 compared to 243 last year. The Birth Rate is 18.73. My explanation of this was considered in last year's report. There were 5 illegitimate births compared with 3 last year.

DEATH RATE.

The Death Rate is 13.80, being the rate produced by 169 deaths, and comparing this with last year's 136, shows a considerable increase. This is due mainly to 21 deaths though registered in other districts as Bodmin Asylum and Torpoint Workhouse, were shortly before residents in our district. These transferable deaths are now regularly sent me by the Medical Officer of Cornwall, and are accounted for by me. No death was due to any notifiable Infectious Disease, but of other infectious diseases, one was due to Measles, one to Acute Polyomyelitis, and two to Influenza. There were 8 deaths from Pulmonary Tubercle, and the large number of 21 from Cancer. The Infant deaths amounted to 24. 87 deaths occurred at an age over 65. Accidents caused 5 deaths.

The case of Polyomyelitis resulting in death should be particularly referred to.

It occurred on September 16th, at a date prior to the resolution of the Council making that disease notifiable, and, therefore, it was never known to me until I received the ordinary notification of the death on October 3rd, so that I had no opportunity of investigating the case at the time or taking any possible steps to confirm the diagnosis. On seeing this notification of death I went next day to Tideford Cross and found it had taken place in a workman's cottage, not over-crowded and not over-clean, with good sanitary conditions, not exactly on but within a few yards of the highway, which, though not used except rarely for motor traffic, was, and had been during September, dry and therefore dusty. There were several other small children in the house besides this one of 5 years of age, some of whom had been attending Tideford School. The case was not nor could have been isolated. There was no spread of the disease in the family nor did any cases arise from contact with school children, so the infectiveness in this case could not have been intense. I prohibited any of the contacts attending school for another two weeks, but that is not of much use as it only means playing with other children in the village. The disease Cerebrospinal Fever, which is closely related to the last disorder, we have had no cases of. One death of a suspicious case was investigated by me, and I am glad to say I was enabled to have a post mortem examination, and sent away a portion of the spinal cord membranes and vertebra to the Chemical Research. The result was negative. As regards such helps to diagnosis, I wish to say that my Council gave me quite a free hand in having any specimens examined, and meet the expense incurred.

Among the Infantile deaths I note that of the 23, none were of illegitimate children; 4 were due to premature birth; 5 to general debility; and 4 to Diarrhoea and

Enteritis. Two of these Enteritis cases were brought up in Torpoint Workhouse as they were twins whose mother died at their birth; in these cases it could not have been careless or improper feeding.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

The number of cases reported is practically the same as last year for this year. For the first time Pauper Phthisis is included and accounts for two cases notified. The notified cases are 37 in number. Measles is not notifiable, though I wish it were for the benefit of the district, and for that reason recommended the Council to adopt it, but they declined to do so. It is, perhaps, as serious a disease in its immediate results as Scarlet Fever is now with us, and was present in our district in January and February and caused one death.

Scarlet Fever has been continually with us as last year, and is represented by 22 cases, but these cases were confined to nine houses in different parts of the district, sometimes ten miles apart. When once a case was in a house it simply went through all susceptible, as no isolation is possible. I cannot call it an epidemic as except in the family it did not spread. We deal with it by restricting attendance at school of all possible contacts, and disinfection of the premises, but this last is imperfect as it must be in cottages, as the whole place is infected and you cannot turn the family out into the roads while we disinfect properly. The great hindrance cannot be got over except by Isolation Hospitals. One reason of the spread of Scarlet Fever is the very mildness of the disease. As an instance, I received a note from a schoolmaster to say a boy looked as if he were peeling and might have Scarlet Fever, I went down to Millbrook about it—the school was just closing for the Christmas holidays—and saw the boy who had a most suspicious look. I believe he had had Scarlet Fever. Anyhow, I took all precautions and had the school disinfected. The new year will prove whether it was or not, as from the boy's intercourse with others, If I am right in the case, Millbrook will have several cases.

DIPHTHERIA.

For the first time since I have been Medical Officer of Health there have been no cases of this disease, which is very pleasing, seeing the trouble in former years that this disease caused, chiefly in Millbrook. Millbrook, where we have spent a lot of money in the last few years, has, with the exception of the boy with possible Scarlet Fever, been clear of any infectious disease, though a case of Enteric Fever sent from another town was reported as not yet completely recovered. This is rather a contrast to several years ago, when inquiries were held on the prevalence of Enteric Fever, and when Diphtheria was always present. Donderry is another place where we have had no Infectious Disease, but this is nearly always the same year after year, which is gratifying, as it is the one place in our district where visitors come for the summer.

ERYSIPELAS.

The cases, four in number, in our district, are found in old persons with ulcerated legs, owing to want of proper attention, as mentioned in my last report. Last year the cases were 13 in number. I there mentioned that the administrations of our District Nurses would, I believe, diminish this number, and I believe that has been the reason of the reduction from 13 to 4. Two of these cases were due to neglect of superficial cuts in persons working on farms amongst cattle.

ENTERIC FEVER.

Of this disease we have had eight cases in three houses. One case was a not completely cured case sent to Millbrook. The next two cases in one house in a terrace at St. Stephens, with full water supply from the public service, good sewerage, but a heap of all kinds of house refuse (fish, etc.), collected for use in the garden, festering close to the house, covered with flies. This, no doubt, was the cause, the flies being the carriers. The case of four in one house I took a lot of trouble over but could not be satisfied as to the cause. The best built and kept house in St. Germans, with a good water supply common to others and an up-to-date piped sewerage system. The first two cases were children who had been away for one day to a watering place, a long way off, and all points to their having acquired it there. The other two were contacts from the first two, and here again I blame flies as carriers, but otherwise the precautions were thorough and were carried out.

On the whole our infectious disease rate, represented by 37 cases, including Tuberculosis, is satisfactory, seeing we have no Isolation Hospital to isolate the cases in.

TUBERCULOSIS (Pauper).

Two cases are notified. We deal with these by advice as to Sanitary conditions and reserve a bed at Didworthy Sanatorium. In my printed return I have referred to this bed as belonging to St. Germans District Council. That I correct. It is subscribed for by the St. Germans Board of Guardians, which makes this difference that it is available not only for cases from our district but also for cases from the Urban Districts of Saltash and Torpoint, both of which places are in the St. Germans Union for Poor Law purposes.

In relation to the notification and prevention of Infectious Disease, my Council allow me to have any Bacteriological examinations made for which purpose I keep and supply on request swabs for possible Diphtheria, to any Practitioner. Of these, only one has been used this year, with negative results. I also supply Antitoxine for the treatment of poor persons. I also have power to submit to Bacteriological examination any sputum of supposed Tubercular cases.

The one case of Puerperal Fever reported could not be traced to any insanitary condition, or neglect, or improper nursing.

The Midwives are the same in number as last year, and are all certified. The supervision of these was taken out of the hands of the Medical Officer of Health by the County Council, and their duties transferred to others, so as Medical Officer of Health I shall have no knowledge of their work except where a case of Puerperal Fever occurs.

THE WATER SUPPLY.

We have never before had such a continuously dry summer as in 1911, and those parts of our district depending on wells and local public supplies have been suffering from an incomplete supply never before known. We have in our district 1,172 houses supplied from the Council's Mains on four services.

- 1.—St. Stephens Parish from Plymouth supply. This is always abundant and good.
- 2.—Millbrook from an intaking reservoir fed by springs and there stored. This is a good water but there is not a full supply in dry weather.

3.—Kingsand and Cawsand, both on public supply. Kingsand has just reasons to complain of the scant supply in summer, particularly in the higher parts. This year, for some weeks, the water supply had to be confined to two hours a day for the upper part, and in the lower portion water was turned on into different sections at different hours of the day. I went there several times and was satisfied that the Water Bailiff was most careful and painstaking in his management, and to him it was due that the inhabitants had, though only at certain times in the day, water at all. Water [can be obtained three-quarters of a mile away, and carried by gravity with a sufficient head all over Kingsand.

This scheme is under the consideration of the Council.

4.—Downderry also complains of the smallness of its supply, and rightly. Negotiations are now taking place over some water rights, the acquisition of which would allow us to turn sufficient water into our reservoirs to meet our needs.

Antony Passage water supply seems to have been quite dropped except when it comes up year after year "for the last nine years," in the Annual Report. Tideford water supply, being syphoned from a deep well, gives considerable trouble, in that the syphon often does not act. Gravitation from this well is the cure for this trouble, but would involve a deep cutting.

Only four samples of water were examined, all were good but one, which contained superficial contamination. In cases of Enteric, or when I think it advisable, we have a Bacterial examination of the water made, besides the ordinary quantitative.

Several notices have had to be issued for the people's protection of wells. They have all been complied with. The want of a water supply at Minard Cross and Cutmeer Saw Mills, referred to in my report of 1910, has been met by the Earl of St. Germans, who has provided an adequate supply, to the satisfaction of the Council.

SEWERAGE.

During the year there have been 24 new connections made with our sewers, and 13 put in order. In those parts where no sewerage system exists we have had 9 new earth closets built, and 34 other forms of conveniences and ashpits built this year. Many of these were duplicative of already existing conveniences so that we shall not have less than one convenience to one cottage. These Sanitary wants are found during the Inspection under the Housing and Town Planning Act, but as the defects come under the regulations of other Acts they are dealt with under whatever Act suits the circumstances best.

There are several places in which the Sewerage is defective; some are under consideration. Cremyll has been practically dealt with, the Admiralty and Board of Trade sanction having been obtained for an improved outfall.

Some houses in Cawsand are on a level too low to allow them to discharge into the sewer in Garrett Street. A new outfall is proposed for these houses, and plans have been sent to the Board of Trade for their sanction. One of our outfalls complained of has been carried out, but in the villages there still remains what has been referred to in my last report, namely, the silting up and flooding of our sewers and the necessary replacement of the stone drain in Bank Street by a proper pipe sewer. The nuisance at Port Wrinkle has been corrected by carrying a pipe sewer where wanted. The village of St. Stephens is still without sewerage and, as stated in my last report, is in a deplorable condition. My recommendations of last year should be carried out.

The Sewerage [at Tideford is in a fair way to be completed at once. The ventilation of sewers also to be noted in my last report as being necessary at Cross Park and Kimberley terrace has not received attention, and the cesspit at Landrake still overflows on the surface of the field, and although the tenant of the field undertakes not to graze on it, the condition of things should not still remain, but the overflow should either be treated by sub-irrigation, or be carried to the arable land of Paradise.

HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING ACT.

The inspection of the District is going on at times when the Sanitary Inspector is not otherwise employed. No special officer has been appointed to carry this Act out, and as the Medical Officer of Health visits all houses after the Sanitary Inspector has examined them, in which there is anything to report or any doubt exists as to the conditions, it necessarily follows that in our scattered district the complete examination will take a long time. So far 73 houses have been examined with the following results, not taking into consideration other defects found and dealt with under other statistics.

Houses examined.	Defects reported to Council.	Closing Orders.	Results.
73	11 all corrected.	3	1 Put right. 2 Order still stands.

Under the Act the Council have decided to erect 5 Workmen's Cottages in districts where they are needed, particularly for road men.

The Housing Accommodation is on the whole good and sufficient, except in isolated cases. The fact that 14 new cottages have been built and 8 renovated, with a decreasing population, points to this.

The Slaughter Houses are well kept, but as I have before pointed out the principle of having numerous small widely scattered slaughter houses, necessarily free from inspection at the correct time, is radically wrong. No Tuberculous meat has been found in them at the 52 inspections made, but no special precautions are existing to prevent such meat being used.

DAIRIES.

90 inspections have been made of these by the Sanitary Inspector and myself. They are all satisfactory and no particular action has had to be taken against any. Flies, again, as a means of spread of Infectious Disease, are quite ignored, and they are not excluded from milk as they should be. How long is it to be before flies are recognised as the most filthy carriers of every known infectious disease, who vomit what they have gathered from the nearest dung heap, midden or worse, in our milk and on our food whenever they alight thereon.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE HOSPITAL.

Nothing has come of the proposed joint action with Saltash with reference to the provision of this very necessary adjunct to the prevention of the spread of Infectious Disease. I am afraid that with the exception of provision for Small Pox we will be found wanting in this respect, and we will begin to seriously consider this question after the mischief has been done. Isolation amongst the poor never is, and hardly ever can

be thoroughly carried out, and it seems playing with disinfection and isolation to go on as we are obliged to. Disinfection cannot be thorough in a cottage of two to four rooms, and isolation, which practically means keeping children from school and parents from work, gives them a glorious opportunity of, after contact in their homes, spreading the disease amongst their neighbours during friendly intercourse

The Inspection of Workshops has been regularly carried out by the Inspector. No cases of any Infectious Disease have been present in any of the workplaces, which are clean and not overcrowded in any way. There are not many out-workers in our district.

No Schools were closed by me on account of Infectious Disease, but one classroom was disinfected as previously noted.

No cases of Anthrax have occurred amongst human beings, though there have been cases in animals in the district.

In conclusion, may I thank the District Council for their support during the year, which has always been willingly afforded me.

I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

R. T. MEADOWS.